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# Small-Scale Agriculture Today

Office for Small-Scale Agriculture



## FALL 1995

U.S. Department of Agriculture - Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

Agricultural Research For A Better Tomorrow

### AT ISSUE . . . PRIME TIME

Living in the greater Washington, D.C. metropolitan area has permitted me to annually experience the varied climatic conditions of Washington weather. The past summer was oppressively hot and sultry; temperature records of more than 100 years were broken. Fall is here and the high temperatures have abated. Daylight becomes less with each passing day. It is a time of change and a time for this writer to reflect and look ahead. Fall is a time to dream aloud of next spring and the future seasons.

*Small-Scale Agriculture Today* was first published in Spring 1988, 31 issues ago. However, it may very well be the last. The publication never had a designated editor, but I want to thank the more than 20,000 readers—most of whom I've never met—for the opportunity to share with each of you my topics, technology, clippings, comments, and calendar of events. Our readers have been the fertile fields where, over the last 7 years, I have tried to sow seeds of opportunity for the future of American agriculture.

After nearly 39 years of government service, it's time for me to move on. As for the future, new "prime time" seasons are quickly forthcoming. Spring 1996 will be the beginning of another journey; an opportunity to plant a new seed that will mature and yield an abundant crop of new insights about America's small-scale agricultural industry.

Over the years, I have worn a variety of hats and had wonderful opportunities to meet many interesting people. Surely it wasn't longer ago than yesterday that I was running and playing in the fields. Now I am bumping the barrier at the other end of the spectrum. Interestingly, our lives are lived largely amidst a process of continually sorting through traditions and possibilities, while exploring new challenges.

Farming and the agriculture business have always been central to the economics of my lifestyle and livelihood. I have often heard the phrase that "small family farms are the backbone of rural America." While those farm families contribute to the local and national economy, their strong social and spiritual

contributions are often overlooked. Hopefully, my travels through the seasons ahead will afford me a one-on-one opportunity to share ideas with many of the friends I have never met, to visit their farms, to harvest their wisdom, and explore the greatness of their family enterprises. I'm looking forward to this new venture!

American society is dynamic. Just like each one of us, the agriculture industry is constantly changing. As we enter the 21st century, our great country will continue to experience even more differences than what we know today. The lives of our children—and their children—will be unlike yours and mine.

Small farms are an important segment of America's history. The contribution of small-scale agriculture during the last decades of the 20th century should be carefully documented for the educators and historians of the future. They must have a clear picture of American agriculture as we have known it.

As we near the end of publication, I would like to have the readers of this Newsletter document the relationship of their farming endeavors with the USDA Office for Small-Scale Agriculture (OSSA). The comments would become a part of recorded history. Letters should be written (preferably typed) on 8" x 11" stationary and not exceed two pages. Please send your documents **Before** December 31, 1995 to:

Associates of the National Agricultural Library  
Bud Kerr, Small-Scale Agriculture Today  
1555 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036

My sincere thanks and very best regards to each and everyone of our readers. I look forward with pleasure to meeting you in the "Prime Time" seasons ahead.

Comments of Howard W. "Bud" Kerr, Jr.,  
Director, USDA Office for Small-Scale Agriculture  
Washington, D.C.

**October 1, 1995**



**Three New Varieties** - All-American Selections (AAS) award winners for 1996 are: Petunia 'Fancy Pink Morn,' Petunia 'Heavenly Lavender' and Salvia 'Strata.' Direct your inquiries about the AAS winners or other gardening subjects to AAS, 1311 Butterfield Road, Suite 310, Downers Grove, IL 60515; telephone: 708-963-0770; fax: 708-963-8864.

**Heighten Public Awareness** - "Book Review: The family farm, long a symbol of the American way of life, is fast disappearing, threatened by social and market forces as well as by technology, greed and pollution. Four books look at four small farms that are struggling to stay afloat." (*The New York Times*, August 6, 1995, p. 13)

**F.Y.I.** - New books about small farming ventures:

*In Good Hands: The Keeping of a Family Farm*, by Charles Fish, 229 pages, Farrar, Straus & Giroux (New York), \$21.

*Here and Nowhere Else: Late Seasons of a Farm and Its Family*, by James Brox, 144 pages, Beacon Press (Boston), \$18.

*Epitaph for A Peach: Four Seasons on My Family Farm*, by David Mas Masumoto, 223 pages (Harper-San Francisco), \$20.

*Mapping the Farm: The Chronicle of a Family*, by John Hildebrand. Illustrated, 252 pages, Alfred A. Knopf (New York), \$23.

**Elsewhere** - Other new books that reflect the true heartbeat of rural America:

*Grass Roots: The Universe of Home*, 212 pages, Milkweed Editions, costs \$17.90. Contact: Robert Breck, 430 First Avenue North, Suite 400, Minneapolis, MN 55401-1743; telephone: 612-332-3192; fax: 612-232-6248.

*Dori Sanders' Country Cooking: Recipes and Stories From the Family Farmstead*, 218 pages, costs \$21.95. Contact: Craig Popelars, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, P.O. Box 2225, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2225; telephone: 919-967-0108.

**For the Record** - You never know when disaster or theft may strike your home. Therefore, it is a good idea to make a visual record. A video camera is the easiest way to do this; but a camera will also suffice. Be sure to describe each item, record the cost, and list any serial numbers.

**Wanted** - California's five million alumni from yesterday's 4-H programs can help today's 4-H by providing adult leadership. YOU can make a difference! Contact: Tammie Erhard, The California 4-H Foundation, Alumni Relations Committee, P.O. Box 73673, Davis, CA 95617; telephone: 916-757-8740.

**Greening Japan** - "Japanese imports of vegetables grew by 66 percent in 1994 to 651,977 metric tons and are up 46 percent in the first five months of this year. Especially hot are broccoli, asparagus, and onions from the United States. American vegetables filled 44 percent of Japan's import plate last year." (*The Wall Street Journal*, August 17, 1995, p. 1)

**50 Tips** - To get your copy of "The Hot 50 Marketing Tips," send \$1.00 to New World Publishing, 3085 Sheridan Street, Placerville, CA 95667.

**Hot** - Many of the poultry production areas of the country experienced temperatures in the nineties during summer 1995. It has been estimated that 10 million plus poultry were lost due to heat during one week in July 1995.

**Cool** - The best time to plant tulips is anytime the soil 6- inches deep is 60°F or colder.

**Free** - "Schools Without Drugs," is an action plan for parents, teachers, and students that can help fight drug use; 87 pages. Contact: S. James, Consumer Information Center - 5C, P. O. Box 100, Pueblo, CO 81002.

**Correlation** - More and more customers are buying or brewing fancy coffee; likewise, "craft beer brewing" has become a popular trend. Three new books guide the novice in a quest for excellence in the art of brewing:

- *A Taste for Beer*, is a comprehensive guide to North America's new generation of beers. Costs \$17.40.
- *Dave Millins Homebrewing Guide*, provides everything you need to know to make a great-tasting beer. Costs \$17.40.
- *Secret Life of Beer: Legends, Lore and Little Known Facts* is a fascinating collection of beerphenalia. Costs \$12.40.

Contact: Storey Communications, P. O. Box 445, Pownal, VT 05261-9988; telephone 1-800-441-5700.

**Lilies** - "What they all like is a good free-draining site and preferably a cool root-run," says Harris Howland in the introduction to the new 160-page book, *The Gardener's Guide to Growing Lilies*. The cost is \$34.45. Contact: Sue Korpela, Timber Press, Inc., 133 S. W. Second Avenue, Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527; telephone: 1-800-327-5680.

**Indispensable Advice** - Good ideas and charming illustrations are found in the 53- page book *Good Bugs For Your Garden*; costs \$13.95. Contact: Craig Popelars, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, P.O. Box 2225, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2225; telephone: 919-967-0108.

**Answer** - Twelve months or 1 year before burning.

**Buy It** - *A Gentle Way: Sows on Pasture* is a 15-page booklet and costs \$4. Contact: Dwight Ault, Rt. 1, Box 230, Austin, MN 55912; telephone: 507-437-3085.

**Tick Control** - "Guinea hens may be a good means of tick control in a farm setting. They also chase off (or kill) snakes and will be very vocal at most strangers coming into 'their' yard." (*News Roundup Update*, August-September 1995, p.3)

**Tip** - Before storing the lawnmower for winter, change the oil and check the spark plug to make sure that your mower will be ready to go next spring.

**We All Scream** - Not just a cookbook, but a "how-to" guide for ice cream makers. The 384-page soft cover edition of *Ice Cream! The Whole Scoop*, costs \$19.95. Contact: Mary B. Keene, Glenbridge Publishing, Ltd., 6010 W. Jewell Avenue, Lakewood, CO 80232; telephone: 1-800-986-4135; fax: 303-987-9037.



## TOPICS AND TECHNOLOGY

**New Ones!** - *Poultry and Peppers* are the latest factsheets in the series *A Small-Scale Agriculture Alternative* from the USDA's Office for Small-Scale Agriculture (OSSA). The publications are free and list several sources of information, from cultural practices to tips for beginners and farming veterans. Contact: Bud Kerr, USDA-OSSA (Factsheets), Ag Box 2244, Washington, DC 20250-2244; telephone: 202-720-5245; fax: 202-205-2448. NOTE: Be sure to enclose a typed, self-addressed, gummed label with your request!

**Looking Ahead** - If you control weeds surrounding the greenhouses next spring, pests and diseases will be substantially discouraged from moving in.

**Insect-Resistant Pea** - "Australian researchers have altered the genetic makeup of a field pea to give it a biological defense against pea weevil, which destroys pea seed in storage. They say the technology paves the way for making other grain legumes resistant to insect attack." (*The Furrow*, Summer, 1995, p. 29)

**Costs \$35** - SEEDS, a software program, provides computer-assisted analyses with a cross-indexed database of over 1,000 wild-growing native and hardy adapted plants that you can use as food, medicine, wildlife habitat, animal forage, hedges, insect control, and living fertilizers. Contact: Russell E. Blalack, Appropriate Systems Design, 1081 Milky Way, Cupertino, CA 95014; telephone: 408-996-9750.

**Something New** - Wiley is introducing America to Southern foods—spices and seasonings - that are fat and cholesterol free. The 5-item line of unique flavor enhancers will make the preparation (and roadside market stand sales) of Southern vegetables perfect. For more information, contact: Wiley Mullins, Healthy Southern Classics, 1220 Post Road, Fairfield, CT 06430; telephone: 203-256-9313; fax: 203-256-1350.

**At Last!** - The 50-page publication *Shift-Trellises for Better Management of Brambles* (VAES Bulletin 95-2) contains layout diagrams and color photographs of raspberries and blackberries on shift-trellises. The new production technique was pioneered and developed by Dr. Herbert S. Stiles. Single copies are free; however, larger quantities can be purchased for \$5 per copy. Make check payable to: **Treasurer Virginia Tech**. Contact: Suella R. Wolfe, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 104 Hutcheson Hall, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0402; telephone: 540-231-6986/6336.

**Question** - On average, firewood needs to be cut and split at least how long before burning? (a) 1 month (b) 6 months (c) 12 months (d) 18 months? The answer is somewhere in this newsletter.

**Unique Gift** - A Shitake log to grow your own gourmet treat! Two sources - contact: Paul Goulard, Hardscrapple Enterprise, Inc., HC 71, Box 42, Circleville, WV 26804; telephone: 304-358-2921, or Sondra Williams, Lost Creek Mushroom Farm, Rt. 2, Box 305, Perkins, OK 74059; telephone: 1-800-792-0053.

**Oh, Deer** - They are becoming a problem! The publication *Reducing Deer Damage to Home Gardens and Landscape Plantings*, offers information that allows for informed decisions about deer damage problems in urban and suburban landscapes. Contact: Milo E. Richmond, Department of Natural Resources, Fernow Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853; telephone: 607-255-2151.

**Free** - *The catalogue, Books for Self-Reliance & Living*, is now available. Contact: Andy Lee, Good Earth Publications, P.O. Box 160, Columbus, NC 28722; telephone: 1-800-499-3201.

**Costs \$7.95** - Color photos in the 16-page booklet *Shoeing the Draft Horse*, help to make this a how-to package for farriers. Contact: Lessiter Publications, P.O. Box 624, Brookfield, WI 53008-0624; telephone: 414-782-4480; fax: 414-782-1252.

**Soil Reaction** - Soils may be either too acid or too alkaline for maximum horticultural production. The optimum range varies somewhat for different crops, but for many a desirable range is pH range of 6.0 to 7.5. A pH of 7.0 is neutral.

**New Book** - *Child Health Through Nutrition and Physical Activity*, offers a comprehensive review of the latest information on nutrition; physical activity; eating disorders and childhood obesity; and prevention of chronic diseases in adulthood. The 377-page book costs \$35. Contact: Jolene Rupe, Human Kinetics, 1607 North Market Street, P.O. Box 5076, Champaign, IL 61825-5076; telephone: 217-351-5076; fax: 217-351-2674.

**It's the Law** - *A Farmer's Legal Guide to Production Contracts* by Neil Hamilton (Drake University Law School) is 175 pages and costs \$16.95. Contact: Kirstan Bowers, Top Producer, 230 West Washington Square, Philadelphia, PA 19106; telephone: 215-829-4867.

**Did You Know?** - The slower the background music, the less people tend to eat at meals.

**Miscellaneous** - There are many good publications on diverse topics readily available, including the following:

- *Vegetable Production Handbook*, 141VPH, \$14
- *Reducing Deer Damage to Home Garden Plantings*, 147DD, \$3.50
- *Timber Management for Small Woodlots*, 1471B180, \$5 (newly revised)
- *Wildlife Damage in Fruit Orchards*, 1471B236, \$4.75
- To order, contact: Lisa Moon, Resource Center, Cornell University, 7 Cornell Business and Technology Park, Ithaca, NY 14850; telephone: 607-255-2080.

**Both Ways!** - "The wife of a small farmer sold her surplus butter to a grocer. On one occasion, the grocer said, 'your butter was underweight last week.' 'Now, fancy that,' said Mrs. Farmer. 'Baby mislaid my weight that day, so I used the pound of sugar you sold me.'" (*The Cotton Gin and Oil Mill Press*, August 5, 1995, p. 4)



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**October 5-8, 1995** - The American Community Gardening Association's 16th Annual Conference, Red Lion Inn, 310 S. W. Lincoln, Portland, OR. Reserve directly by calling the Inn at 1-800-547-8010 or 503-221-0450; fax: 503-6260.

**October 18-21, 1995** - The Third Annual Conference of the National Association of Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs, Radisson Picacho Plaza Hotel, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Contact: Mark Winne at 203-296-9325; fax: 203-296-8326.

**October 22-25, 1995** - Third New Crops Symposium, Indianapolis, IN. Contact: Jules Janick, Indiana Center for New Crops and Plant Products, Purdue University, 1165 Horticulture Building, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1165.

**November 3-4, 1995** - Small Farm Today Seminar and Trade Show, Midway Exposition Center, Columbia, MO. Contact: Chuck DeCourley, 3903 W. Ridge Trail Rd., Clark, MO 65243-9523; telephone: 1-800-633-2535.

**November 10-11, 1995** - 12th Annual Hydroponic Grower Conference, Delta Orlando Resort Hotel, Orlando, FL. Contact: Dan Brentlinger, P.O. Box 310, Medina, OH 44258; telephone: 216-725-5656.

**November 12-14, 1995** - Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Conference for the Western Region, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco, CA. Contact: Jered Lawson, CASFS, 1156 High St., Santa Cruz, CA 95064; telephone: 408-459-3964; fax: 408-459-2799.

**November 28-30, 1995** - Second Annual Southwest Farm and Equipment Show, Desert Expo Centre, Indio, CA. Contact: Bill Arballo, Southwest Farm & Equipment Show, P.O. Drawer 10040, Indio, CA 92202; telephone: 619-775-0696.

**December 2, 1995** - Putting Small Acreage to Work Seminar, Plaza One, Rock Island, IL. Contact: Gary Bullen, Macomb Extension Center, 480 Deere Rd., P.O. Box 575, Macomb, IL; telephone 309-836-3366; fax: 309-836-2916.

**December 7, 1995** - The Third Conference of the Fertilizer Research and Education Program (FREP) of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), Kearney Agricultural Center, University of California, Parlier, CA. Contact: Debbie Scott, CDFA's Fertilizer Research and Education Program, 916-653-5340.

**January 4, 1996** - Marketplace of Ideas, Bismarck Civic Center, Bismarck, ND. Contact: Marilyn Kipp, North Dakota Department of Agriculture, 600 E. Boulevard, 6th Floor, Bismarck, ND 58505-0020; telephone: 701-663-0150.

**January 5-8, 1996** - Grower Expo '96, Hyatt Regency O'Hare, Rosemont, IL. Contact: Kathy Wootton, 708-208-9080; fax 708-208-9350. Within the United States only, call 1-800-456-5380; fax: 1-800-456-0132.

**February 4-7, 1996** - The National Association of Conservation Districts' (NACD) 50th Annual Meeting, Las Vegas, NE. Registration information available by calling 1-800-825-5547.

USDA/CSREES	28
Office for Small-Scale Agriculture	
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